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Detection and Measurement of Sulfur Mustard (HD) Offgassing from the Weanling Pig Following Exposure to Saturated HD Vapor

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) Sulfur mustard (HD) is a chemical warfare agent for which there is neither antidote nor adequate therapeutic protection. Animal models are employed to investigate mechanisms of injury and to evaluate protective measures against HD exposure. Researchers whose experiments involve cutaneous application of HD vapor to animals benefit from the detection and quantitation of HD at the exposed site. The ability to detect and quantify HD enables the researcher to follow safe procedures in handling skin samples. We have designed an experimental procedure to measure HD offgassing from animal models. A Minicams®, which is a portable gas chromatograph (GC) equipped with a flame photometric detector (FPD) and with online sorbent collection and desorption, was used to monitor the HD concentration. Confirming measurements were made using a two-step process that trapped HD on a Tenax sorbent offline and then transferred the sample by means of an ACEM 900 to a GC equipped with either FPD or a mass spectrometer (MS). We collected data from six experiments in which weanling pigs were exposed to saturated HD vapor via vapor caps containing 10 µl of HD. HD concentration was measured in time-weighted-average (TWA) units at a specific HD application site. The currently recommended exposure value for HD is 3 ng/l, 1 TWA unit. In five of the six experiments, Minicams HD concentration values were less than 0.5 TWA, 2 hours postexposure, and in one of the experiments, TWA Minicams concentration was less than 0.5 TWA, 5 hours post-exposure. GC/MS detection was used in three of the experiments to confirm Minicams data and to provide greater sensitivity and selectivity at 0.1 TWA. GC/MS data confirmed that HD concentrations fell below 0.1 TWA in less than 5 hours for a specific site. These measurements of HD concentrations provided information on the expeditious and safe handling of HD-exposed tissue.				
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Introduction

Sulfur mustard (2,2'-dichlorodiethyl sulfide, HD) has been employed as a chemical warfare agent since World War I when its powerful vesicating properties were unleashed at Ypres, Belgium on July 12, 1917. From that day to the present, a huge body of evidence has grown to support the insidious incapacitating capability of HD. Because of this, extensive research has been directed to the protection against, and the treatment of, HD wounds. Part of this chemical defense effort involves the use of animal models. In a typical experiment, saturated HD vapor is applied to the skin of the animal using vapor caps containing 10 μ l of HD.^{1,2,3} The vapor caps are adhered to the animal for measured time intervals designed to measure specific aspects of the wound such as concentration of HD in tissue,⁴ erythema, Nikolsky's sign, and microblister formation.⁵ After the vapor caps are removed, the safe handling of the exposed skin site containing HD becomes a decision for the researcher. Previously, when concentration determinations for HD offgassing were not made, a 24-hour delay between agent use and subsequent work outside engineering controls (laboratory safety hoods) was common practice.⁶ We provided an analytical procedure based on solid sorbent-gas chromatographic techniques for detecting HD below the recommended time-weighted-average (TWA) value of 3 ng/l.⁷ These detection techniques enable the researcher to make informed decisions about the safe handling of exposed animal tissue.⁸

Materials and Methods

1. The sulfur mustard (2,2'-dichlorodiethyl sulfide, HD) employed in this study was lot #HD-U-2325-CTF-N-1, 97.2 mole % (US Army Edgewood Research, Development and Engineering Center, Aberdeen Proving Ground (USAERDEC), MD). Stock solutions of HD in hexane at 9.5 mg/ml were diluted with hexane to 1.9 ng/ μ l for calibration of Minicams and GC/FPD. USAERDEC, Monitoring Branch provided a stock solution, Aircombo-4249-CTF-Dil, of 1.04 ng/ μ l of HD in hexane for GC/MS calibration.

2. Minicams (O.I. Analytical, CMS Field Products Group, Birmingham, Alabama) measurements were made on a laboratory monitoring system designed 1) to collect HD on Tenax solid sorbent, 2) to thermally desorb and then gas chromatographically separate mixtures and 3) to detect HD by flame photometric detection (FPD) using a sulfur filter. The 5-minute cycle of the Minicams consisted of a 3-minute sampling period, when sample is collected on a preconcentrator tube (100 mm L, 2.4 mm ID, 15 mm bed of Tenax), followed by a 2-minute purge, when desorption and gas chromatographic analysis occurs. A 7 m, 0.32 mm ID, 5 μ m DB-1 column (J & W Scientific, Folsom, CA) with a helium flow rate of 20 ml/min produced HD retention times of 91 s when the column was heated from the 30-s to the 90-s point of the cycle at 150°C/min. Both the hydrogen and air flow rates were 35 ml/min for the FPD. Measurements were made continuously in 5-minute cycles with a Minicams by placing a 2 in diameter funnel several mm from an HD-exposed dorsal or ventral site of a weanling pig. During the sampling phase of the cycle, an air sample was drawn at approximately 1 L/min measured with a Mass Flow Meter, model FM-360 (Tylan Corporation, Torrance, CA,) through a heated line onto a preconcentrator tube within the Minicams.

3. Gas chromatographic flame photometric detection (GC/FPD) measurements were made with a Hewlett Packard, Model 5890-Series II, gas chromatograph and Hewlett Packard 19258A flame photometric detector (Hewlett Packard Rockville, MD) on air samples trapped on Tenax tubes (Dynatherm Analytical Instruments, Kelton, PA). The samples were collected at 1 L/min using a vacuum line and flow meter, model B-157-2, (Porter Instrument Co., Hatfield, PA). Air samples were collected by sequentially passing over Tenax, and then bubbling through 5% sodium hypochlorite solutions to assure decontamination of any residual HD. The helium carrier gas flow rate was 4 ml/min through the column, and the flow through the detector was adjusted to 20 ml/min with auxiliary helium. For optimum sulfur detection, hydrogen and air flow rates were 60 ml/min and 100 ml/min respectively with the FPD temperature at 230 °C. The temperature program was initially set at oven temperature 90°C for 1 min, with a 30 °C/min ramp rate to a final temperature of 225 °C that was maintained for 0.5 min. Desorption of samples from Tenax tubes onto a GC column was accomplished through ACEM 900 instrumentation (Dynatherm Analytical Instruments, Kelton, PA). The GC was equipped with a 15 m, 0.53 mm ID, 1.0 μ m DB-17 column.

4. Gas chromatographic mass spectrometric detection (GC/MS) measurements were made with a Hewlett Packard, Model 5890 gas chromatograph and Hewlett Packard 5970 mass-selective detector (MSD)- (Hewlett-Packard, Avondale, PA, USA) on air samples trapped on Tenax tube. The samples were collected as described above. The helium carrier gas flow rate was 1 ml/min. The temperature program was initially set at oven temperature 40°C for 1 min, with a 20 °C/min ramp rate to a final temperature of 250 °C that was maintained for 3 min. The transfer line to the MSD was 280 °C. Desorption of samples from Tenax tubes onto a GC column was accomplished through ACEM 900 instrumentation. The GC was equipped with a 30 m, 0.25 mm ID, 0.25 μ m HP-5 column. Analyses were made in the selected-ion mode for detection of the ions and fragment ions of HD at m/z 109, 111, 158, and 160.

5. An ACEM 900 for sample concentration and sample focusing was interfaced to Hewlett Packard, Model 5890-Series II, gas chromatographs with either a Hewlett Packard 19258A flame photometric detector or an HP 5970B mass-selective detector. A primary Tenax tube 6 mm o.d. with 4 mm i.d., 110 mm length was used to collect the sample, and a second, lower volume tenax tube (6 mm o.d., 0.9 mm i.d., 185 mm length) was used to focus the sample prior to thermal desorption onto the GC column. Helium continuously flowed through the primary tube at 25 ml/min. A 1 m X 0.20 mm deactivated fused-silica transfer line connected the ACEM 900 to the GC column.

ACEM 900 operating temperatures, when interfaced to the GC/FPD were valve 175 °C, transfer line 250 °C, tube desorb 270 °C, tube idle 60 °C, and trap desorb 300 °C. Time settings were tube dry 1 minute, tube heat 3 minutes, tube cool 1 minute, trap heat 2 minutes, and system recycle 1 minute.

ACEM 900 operating temperatures, when interfaced to the GC/MS were valve 200 °C, transfer line 250 °C, tube desorb 275 °C, tube idle 60 °C, and trap desorb 275 °C. Time settings were tube dry 1 minute, tube heat 2 minutes, tube cool 1 minute, trap heat 2 minutes, and system recycle 1 minute.

6. Calculations of HD concentrations using flame photometric detection in the sulfur mode were made with the equation

$$\text{amount} = m \times (\text{response})^{1/1.83}$$

with amount in nanograms (ng), m is a response factor determined from 1.9 ng/ul standard, and response is area in nanoamp-seconds (na-sec). Figures 1 through 6 were made with GraphPad Prism version 2.00, GraphPad Software, Inc, San Diego, CA. GCMS data and quantitation were made with HP G1034C MS ChemStation Software, Hewlett Packard, Rockville, MD.

Laboratory Animal Procedures

Animal Model

Six male castrated Yorkshire cross weanling pigs, *Sus scrofa*, 7-10 kg, were used (Archer Farms, Belcamp, MD). They were quarantined for seven days and screened for evidence of disease before use. They were maintained under an AAALAC accredited animal care and use program. Animals were supplied tap water *ad libitum* and fed two scoops (equal to approximately 1250 g total) of Lab Porcine Chow Grower (Purina 5084, Purina Mills, Inc., Richmond, IN) twice a day. To prevent interaction and any possible subsequent damage to skin, animals were housed individually in 4 x 6 ft pens with slatted aluminum floors. A small rubber mat was placed on the bottom of each pen to help protect skin lesions from abrasion while the animals slept or recuperated from anesthesia. The animal holding room was maintained at 21° ± 2 °C with 50% ± 10% relative humidity using at least 10 complete air changes per hr of 100% conditioned fresh air. Animal rooms were maintained on a 12-hr light/dark full spectrum lighting cycle with no twilight. Large plastic balls (7" diameter) were placed in the animal runs for environmental enrichment.

Sulfur Mustard Exposure

Eighteen to twenty-four hr before agent exposure, the exposure site areas of pigs were closely shaved first with electric clippers and then with a commercial shaving cream and disposable shaving razor. The following day the animals were anesthetized with a combination of xylazine HCl (2.2 mg/kg, IM) and tiletamine HCl and zolazepam HCl (each at 6 mg/kg, IM), and then placed in either sternal or vertebral recumbency. Heating pads were placed under the animals during agent exposure. The shaved skin of anesthetized weanling pigs was exposed to saturated sulfur mustard vapor for 16 or 36 min. Four animals had 24 dorsal exposure sites and two animals had 12 ventral exposure sites. A plastic template was used for consistent anatomical positioning of the sites. Figures 7 and 8 describe the dorsal and ventral sites, respectively.

The agent challenge was established by varying the duration of exposure to HD vapor generated under 14-mm diameter polyethylene caps (No. 300-1006-020, Evergreen Scientific, Los Angeles, CA). Discs of filter paper were fixed 5 mm above the cap rim against the top inner surface of the caps and wetted with 10 µl of undiluted HD. A previous study⁹ established this volume of HD as sufficient to wet the filter paper without run-off. HD-loaded caps were stored

with the rims down on glass microscope slides until application. The vapor caps were held to the skin by double-sided tape assemblies (4.0 x 2.5 cm with a 12-mm hole in the center, thereby creating an exposure area 12 mm in diameter). Although the HD vapor concentration under the caps was not determined, it was estimated from the equilibrium vapor pressure of 0.090 mm of Hg at 30°C to correspond to a vapor concentration of 1.4 mg/l.¹⁰ After removal of the caps and tape assemblies at the appropriate times, the animals were placed in individual holding cages (24" L x 18" W x 16" H) under a connecting hood for 24 hr. Air samples were taken from HD exposed sites for GC analysis during this time. No signs of discomfort or pain were noted during the experiment. Reports from studies in human volunteers indicate that exposure of forearm skin to 10 min of HD vapor is "practically painless" with any later discomfort due to the lesions themselves and not the sulfur mustard.¹¹ Following the 24-hr holding period, the pigs were moved back to their large pens in the animal holding room for the duration of the experiment.

Results and Discussion

Figures 1 through 6 show the Minicams concentration of HD at an HD-exposed site versus time in minutes with data points collected at 5-minute intervals. Concentrations are expressed as 8-hour time-weighted-average (TWA) concentrations. The currently recommended exposure value for 1 TWA unit for HD is 3 ng/l.⁵ Figure 1 contains the first experimental measurement of HD detected from pig 1 at site 19. In this initial experiment, sites 16 and 24 were also investigated. The sudden increase of TWA levels in Figure 1 was attributed to animal movement between data points 5 and 6 and change of sampling from site 19 to site 16 for data point 6. Figure 2 contains data from pig 2 at site 15 with offgassing measurements of HD remarkable for their sudden fluctuations. Pig 2 required the most anesthetic injections of any animal in this 6-animal study as indicated in Table I. The erratic profile in Figure 2 was attributed to pig 2 being the most active of the six pigs; this activity resulted in contractions and expansions at HD-exposed sites causing fluctuations of HD offgassing from reservoirs of active HD.¹² Pig 2 was spiking concentrations above 1 TWA almost 5 hours postexposure. Figure 3 contains data from pig 3 at site 7, and the most notable change is the sudden increase in HD concentration between data point 3 and 4. The increase in TWA at the fourth data point in Figure 3 corresponded to a correction of sampling position on site 7 at this point in the experiment. Figure 4 contains data from pig 4 at site 8; Figure 5 contains data from pig 5 at site 23; Figure 6 contains data from pig 6 at site 18. Figures 4, 5, and 6 show a relatively continuous decrease in TWA with time which demonstrates improved sampling conditions and procedures for pigs 4, 5, 6. For five offgassing studies the Minicams concentration was below 0.5 TWA within two hours of exposure and for one study, pig 2, 5 hours and 5 minutes were required for concentration to be permanently less than 0.5 TWA.

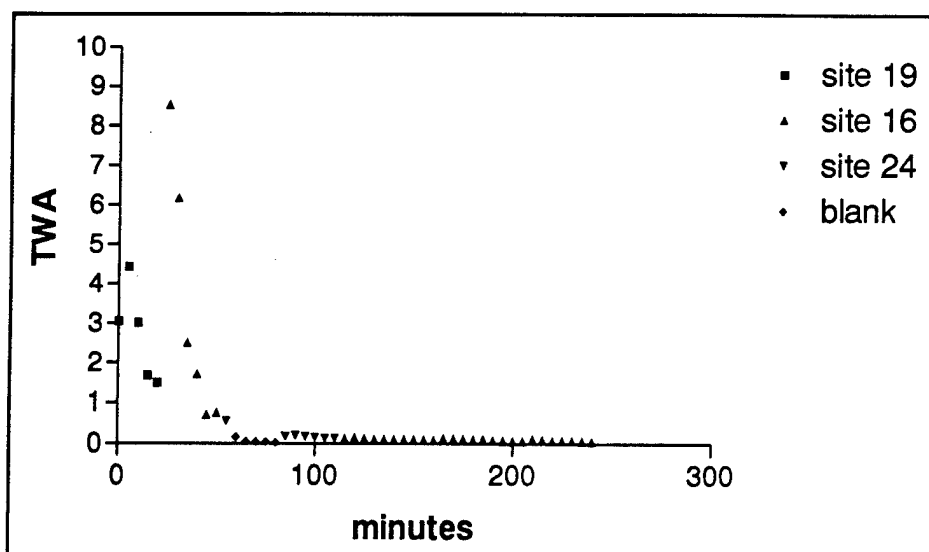
Tables II, III, and IV present TWA values obtained by the three different analytical methods: Minicams, GC/FPD (Figure 9), and GC/MS (Figure 10). Continuous Minicams sampling at neighboring sites contributed to lowering of HD initially detected by the GC/FPD and GC/MS in Tables II and IV. The large initial TWA obtained by GC/FPD in Table III was due to acquiring sample before Minicams sampling began. Continuous Minicams measurements produced a slow, gradual approach to 0.1 TWA. The occurrence of background contamination was attributed to the continuous sampling procedure used with the Minicams. In Tables II-IV, the more rapid

approach to 0.1 TWA concentration by GC/FPD vs Minicams detection was due to 1) the use of one Dynatherm tenax tube per sample with each tube being completely desorbed by heating under nitrogen gas prior to sampling and 2) improvement in GC conditions with a longer column and a lower temperature ramp rate. The GC/MS data confirmed the presence of HD and was able to distinguish HD from peaks that, if present, would interfere with HD when analyzed by GC/FPD. For this reason, the GC/MS data was most reliable, especially at concentrations approaching 0.1 TWA.

Summary

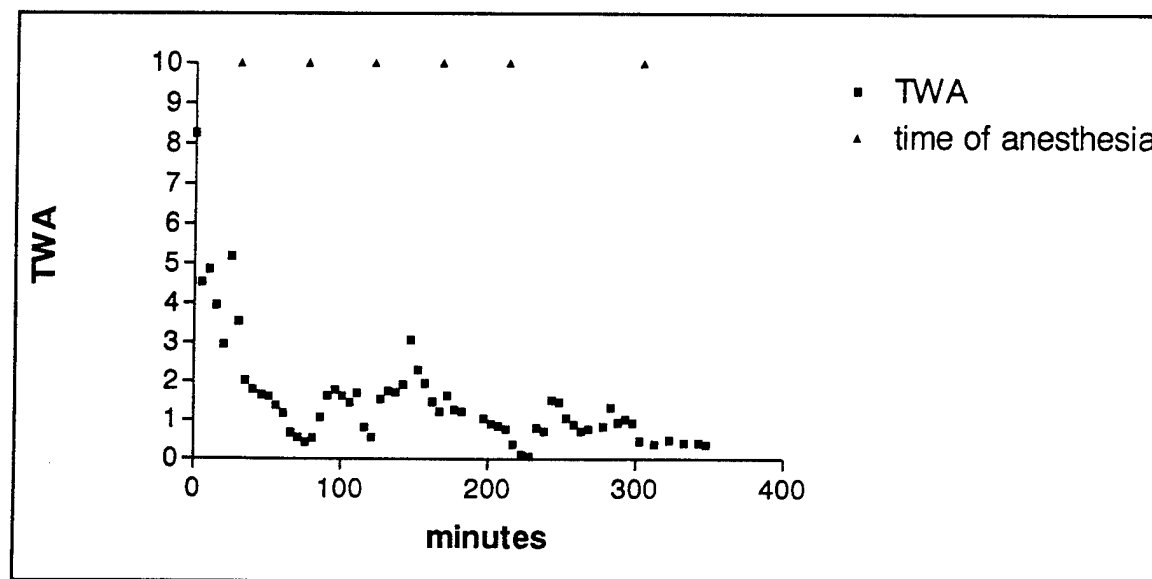
This study provided a quantitative measure of HD offgassing from sites on the weanling pig immediately after exposure. Continuous Minicams measurements in Figures 1-6 indicate site at which specific HD-TWA concentrations were below 0.5 TWA, 5 hours and 5 minutes after exposure for the most active animal, pig 2, while the remaining 5 pigs reached this point in 2 hours or less. At 0.5 to 0.1 TWA the continuous sampling procedure used with the Minicams caused background buildup to interfere with HD offgassing measurements. Selective individual GC/FPD detection reached lower HD-TWA concentrations more quickly than continuous sampling with Minicams because of individual sampling tubes and improved gas chromatographic (longer GC column and lower temperature program ramp rate) conditions. Site specific GC/MS data in Tables II, III, and IV confirmed that it required as long as 5 hours to reach 0.1 TWA. We demonstrated that the minicams provided reliable continuous concentration measurement for HD offgassing to 0.5 TWA. We conclude, using 0.1 TWA as a safe concentration, that animals can be safely removed from engineering control 6 hr after the HD exposure we described.

Figure 1



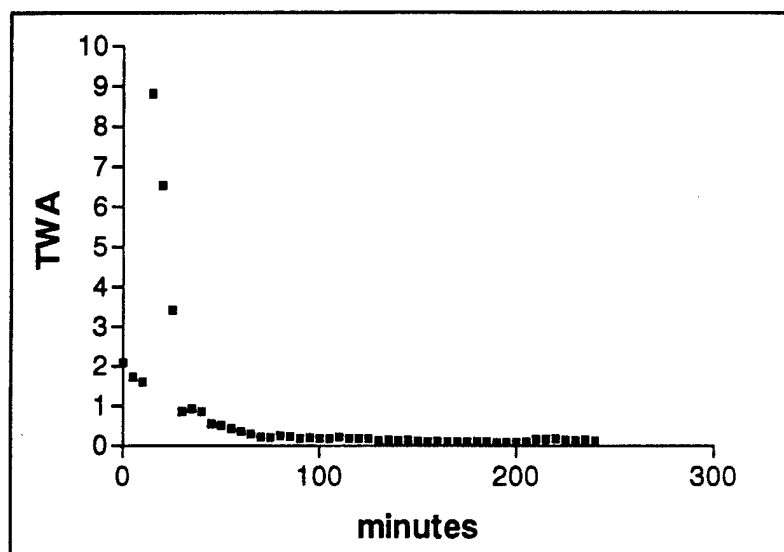
Minicams HD Concentration as Time-Weighted-Averages (TWA) Measured at Sites 19, 16, and 24 on Fig 1.

Figure 2



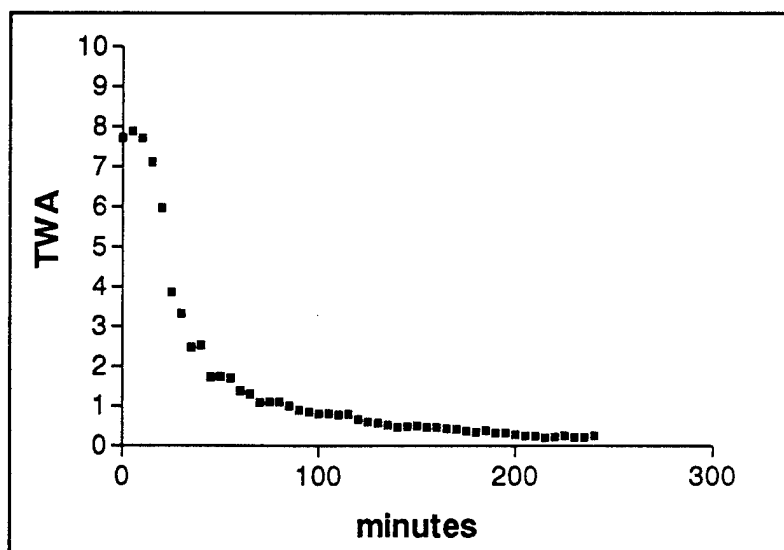
Minicams Measurement of HD Concentration as Time-Weighted-Averages (TWA) from Site 15 on Fig 2. Times of analgesic injection are shown at the top of the figure.

Figure 3



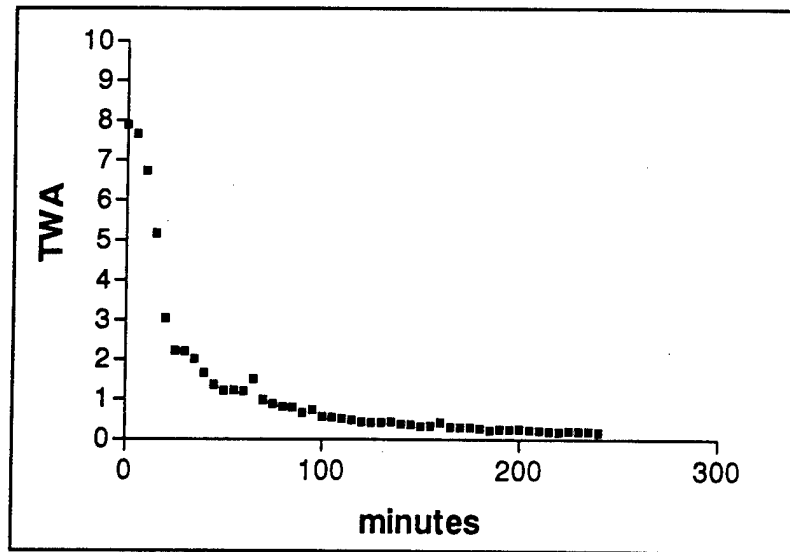
Minicams Measurement of HD Concentration as Time-Weighted-Averages (TWA) from Site 18 on Fig 6.

Figure 4



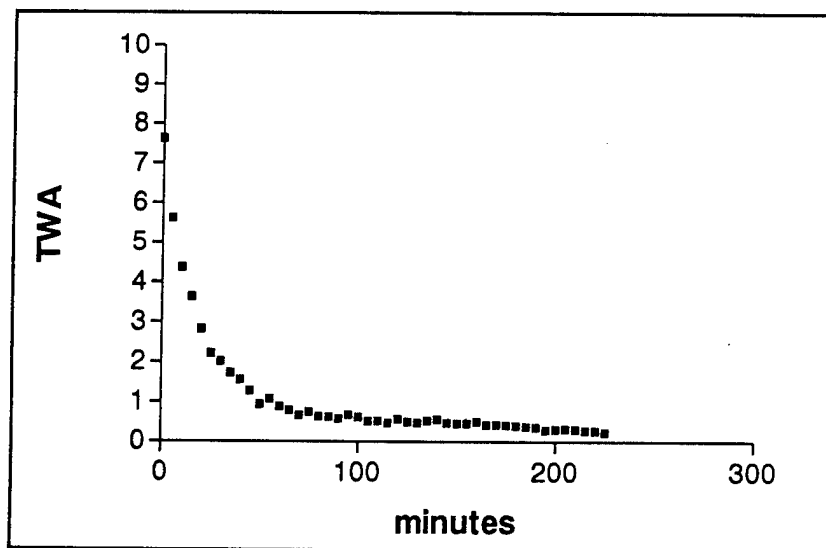
Minicams Measurement of HD Concentration as Time-Weighted-Averages (TWA) from Site 8 on Fig 4.

Figure 5



Minicams Measurement of HD Concentration as Time-Weighted-Averages (TWA) from Site 23 on Fig 5.

Figure 6



Minicams Measurement of HD Concentration as Time-Weighted-Averages (TWA) from Site 18 on Fig 6.

Figure 7

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Head-----	Dorsal Midline-----						-----Tail
	13	14	15	16	17	18	
	19	20	21	22	23	24	

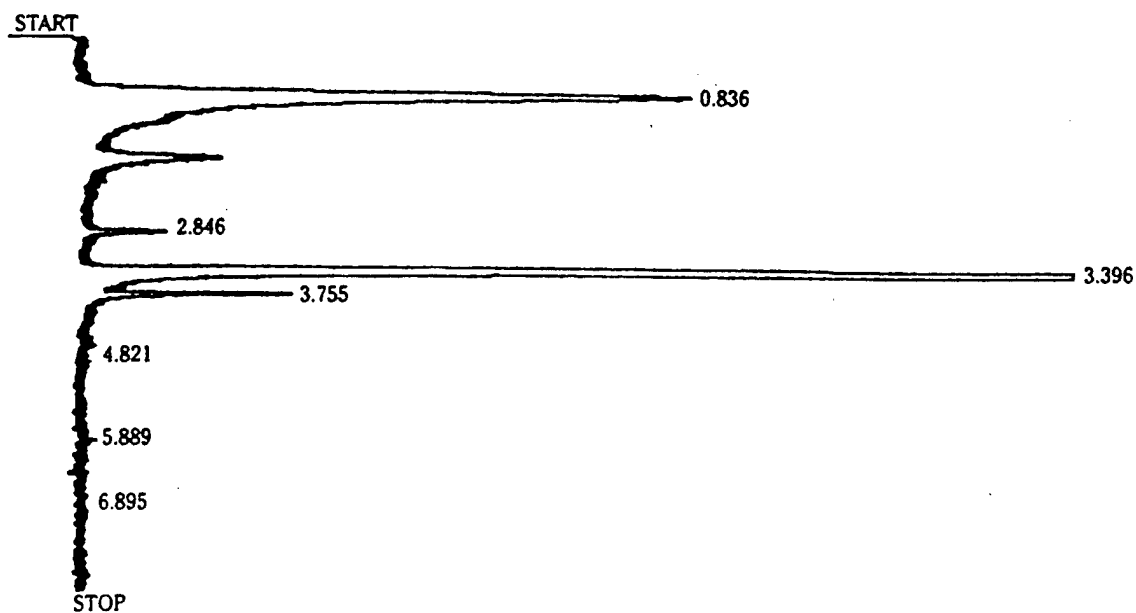
Sites of HD Vapor Cap Dorsal Application on Pigs 1, 2, 5, and 6.

Figure 8

	1	2	3	
	4	5	6	
Head-----	VerticalMidline-----			-----Tail
	7	8	9	
	10	11	12	

Sites of HD Vapor Cap Ventral Application on Pigs 3 and 4.

Figure 9

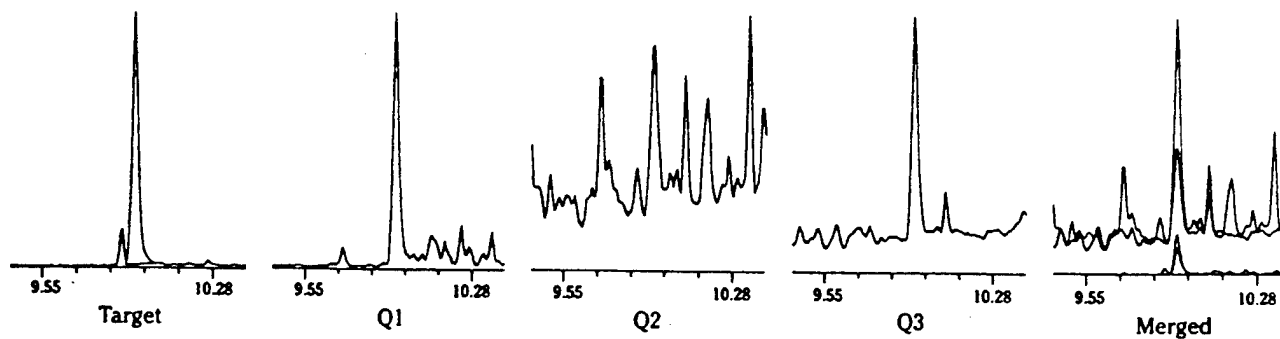


Area%	RT	Area	Type	Width	Area%
	.836	212918	BV	.182	10.19699
	1.735	12390	VV	.053	.59338
	1.755	15566	VV	.058	.74548
	2.846	10860	VV	.066	.52010
	3.396	1810641	PB	.036	86.71456
	3.755	15882	PP	.043	.76062
	4.821	1151	VV	.037	.05512
	5.662	1935	VP	.059	.09267
	5.772	1759	PV	.051	.08424
	5.889	2382	VP	.052	.11408
	6.895	2563	PB	.087	.12275

Total Area = 2088047
 MUL Factor = 1.0000E+00

Chromatogram from Gas Chromatographic Flame Photometric Detection of HD (3.396 min) from Tenax sorbent tubes and transferred by the ACEM 900.

Figure 10



	Signal	Ratios	Limits		RT	Limits	Resp	Integ Type
Tgt	158.00	100.0%			9.94	9.67	114976	sys def
Q1	160.00	66.2	53.9	80.9	9.94	to	76102	sys def
Q2	111.00	297.6	240.0	360.0	9.94	10.16	342129	sys def
Q3	109.00	571.4	431.3	646.9	9.93		656987	sys def

$$0 \times x + 97591.1 \times - 41192.9$$

Coefficient is 0.997199

Data from Gas Chromatographic Mass Spectrometric Detection using selected ion monitoring of masses: 158, 160, 111, and 109 atomic mass units (amu) to detect HD from Tenax sorbent tubes and transferred by the ACEM 900.

Table I

Pig	1	2	3	4	5	6
weight kg	9.9	10.5	9.8	7.2	8.8	12.4
anesthesia times	09:26 10:35 11:54	11:04 11:52 12:35 13:19 14:07 15:40	11:10 12:32 13:38 14:14	10:31 13:02 15:59	10:52 11:53 13:43	12:04 13:30 14:51
HD area total sites	dorsal 24	dorsal 24	ventral 12	ventral 12	dorsal 24	dorsal 24
minicam site # monitored	19,16,&24	15	7	8	23	18
HD vapor duration	16	16	16	16	16	36
time vap cap removed	10:12,30 site 16	10:19,20 site 15	10:34,17 site 7	10:03,20 site 8	09:51,40 site 23	11:22,50 site 18
first minicams time	10:14	10:35	10:48	10:12	10:08	11:38
interval in minutes	1 (partial first cycle)	16	14	9	16	15

Experimental conditions in the six offgassing experiments.

Table II

time after vapor cap removal	Minicams TWA site 8	time after vapor cap removal	GC/FPD TWA site 10	time after vapor cap removal	GC/MSD TWA site 10
00:23:40	7.12	00:23:30	0.68	00:20:30	0.94
00:28:40	5.98			00:26:30	0.27
01:19:40	1.1			00:19:30	0.02
01:39:40	0.91	01:39:30	0.11		
02:20:40	0.58	02:21:30	0.17		
03:10:40	0.35	03:08:30	0.13		
03:35:40	0.21	03:43:30	0.04		
06:38:40	0.26	06:39:30	0.05		

TWA measured at site 8, Fig 4 by Minicams in column 2, TWA measured at site 10, Fig 4 by ACEM 900-Gas Chromatograph Flame Photometric Detection in column 4, and ACEM 900-Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectroscopic Detection in column 6.

Table III

time after vapor cap removal	Minicams TWA site 23	time after vapor cap removal	GC/FPD TWA site 20	time after vapor cap removal	G/MS TWA site 20
00:16:20	7.9	00:13:50	10.32	00:20:50	1.74
01:01:20	1.37	01:03:50	0.51		
01:11:20	1.23	01:09:50	0.85		
01:17:20	1.2	01:18:50	0.66		
01:57:20	0.57	01:59:50	1.68		
02:27:20	0.42	02:26:60	0.93		
02:58:20	0.32	02:56:50	0.54		
03:48:20	0.22	03:47:50	0.28	03:42:50	0.25
04:34:20	0.19	04:23:50	0.14		
04:39:20	0.14	04:30:50	0.07	04:28:50	0.02
05:20:20	0.14	05:12:50	0.1		
05:45:20	0.17	05:34:50	0.09		
06:05:20	0.17	05:53:50	0.15		
06:46:20	0.15	06:38:50	0.11		
07:16:20	0.14	07:07:50	0.05		

TWA measured at site 23, Fig 5 by Minicams in column 2, TWA measured at site 20, Fig 5 by ACEM 900-Gas Chromatograph Flame Photometric Detection in column 4, and ACEM 900-Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectroscopic Detection in column 6.

Table IV

time after vapor cap removal	Minicams TWA site 18	time after vapor cap removal	GC/FPD TWA site 24	time after vapor cap removal	GC/MS TWA site 24
00:16:00	7.2	00:17:00	2.08		
00:37:00	2.77	00:34:00	0.85		
01:02:00	1.26	00:59:00	0.52		
01:22:00	0.77	01:21:00	0.3		
02:03:00	0.52	02:04:00	0.18		
02:53:00	0.48	02:52:00	0.21		
03:19:00	0.43	03:15:00	0.14	03:21:00	0.09
03:44:00	0.39	03:42:00	0.17		
03:54:00	0.31	03:55:00	0.13		
04:09:00	0.36	04:10:00	0.13		
04:40:00	0.28	04:38:00	0.17		
06:31:00	0.20	06:31:00	0.08		
11:39:00	0.17	11:32:00	0.13	22:45:00	0.05

TWA measured at site 18, Fig 6 by Minicams in column 2, TWA measured at site 24, Fig 6 by ACEM 900-Gas Chromatograph Flame Photometric Detection in column 4, and ACEM 900-Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectroscopic Detection in column 6.

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